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ABSTRACT

Many teachers resist staff development programs because they believe that "staff development" is a euphemism for "staff evaluation" and are suspicious of an administration collecting quantitative material on teaching for any reason. Similarly, there exists a competitiveness among teachers that precludes complete trust. In recent years, an increase in staff development has been seen that is proportional to declining student enrollments. However, many teachers have been exposed to unworkable, ill-thought-out and potentially destructive schemes presented as a panacea to all of a school's problems. Three types of staff development activities have been identified: "self-evaluation," the "in-house expert," and the "invited consultant." Self-evaluation is typically tried first; generally, however, little attention is given to ways of measuring improvement. In-house experts are usually teachers with well-attended classes, who are accepted by students and staff; however, they seldom have professional training to teach teachers to teach. The invited consultant faces the problem of being viewed as one who is more interested in enlarging a vita and reputation than in significantly assisting instruction. Since staff resistance has acted as a brake on the thrust of staff development programs, it is now time for directors of these programs to become familiar with the needs and goals of their staff and to establish mutual trust. A bibliography is included. (MB)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE STAFF DEVELOPMENT:
THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

by

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A paper presented at the Community College Social Science
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Traditionally, the teachers' point of view tends to be discounted or even ignored when the topic of staff development is raised at the community college. The rationale for this slight is based on the assumption that regardless of the form staff development takes, teachers will probably be against it. In point of fact, the teachers will likely be against staff development because in the past such "development" has been inseparably linked with teacher evaluation of some type. Teacher evaluation, in turn, invariably involves observations, analyses of teaching skill, data-gathering and like activities, all of which can be threatening to those who are observed, analyzed, and evaluated. The broad implication that staff development should include all members of the college community does not mean much to the teachers. They tend to view staff development programs as administrative manipulations which attack teaching autonomy, rather than programs which could also improve the competence of administrators as well as teachers.

These teachers tend to be intelligent, sensitive people who occasionally witness deceit and bad judgment on the part of their students; they do not imagine that their administrators are above subjecting them to more of the same in the name of innovation. Many teachers firmly believe "staff development" is a euphemism for "staff evaluation," or "teacher performance evaluation." Thus, they become suspicious of an

administration that suddenly begins to collect vast amounts of quantitative material on teaching for any reason. Promises of how the material will or will not be used ring hollow when that same administration is responsible for the rating, ranking, and even removal of teachers. Pronouncements to the contrary, it is at present difficult for the staff to believe that gathered information will be used exclusively to improve teaching. And why should these instructors believe any other way? There is virtually nothing historically to indicate any institutional interest in, or support of, improved teaching. Kenneth E. Eble (1971) writes:

"...institutions and the profession do little to develop college faculty members as teachers. Within institutions, the setting aside of a specific percentage of a budget for faculty development is a very uncommon practice."

The faculty mistrust of the motives behind staff development is not aimed solely at administration. Any group, even one drawn from the teaching staff itself, will be suspected by the remaining members, for nearly every staff has a built-in competitiveness, an individualism which precludes complete trust among its members. Although they are a community of teachers who share some interests in pedagogy, their individual backgrounds, personal purposes, and goals reflect a broad spectrum. Any small group which attempts to spotlight classroom accomplishments could be regarded as threatening since advancement in salary and rank may be realized through

calculated dash and show rather than substantial contribution. Such advancement is highly competitive, even with salary schedules, and any visible innovation can be regarded as potentially detrimental to the majority by bringing reward to the individual. Thus, the teaching staff members at most community colleges are not yet ready to believe in staff development. To many teachers, "staff development" should read "teacher development" since they believe, rightly or wrongly, that administrators have shown little interest in improving themselves.

These attitudes reflect a stereotyped concept most teachers have of what staff development is, or should be. They have had no practical experience with it, either in their careers or as observers when they were still in school. And they have received little leadership from the universities; they have neither witnessed models nor read theory. They have little expectation that anything will change the reality of repetitious teaching assignments, endless committee meetings, and a seemingly uncaring administration. At least one survey of staff members by Keehn (1974) indicates that improvement of instructional skills can best be accomplished by giving the teachers, ". . . more money, equipment, space, time, paraprofessional support, and typing support." The responses in this survey indicate that the teachers had little interest in either evaluation or instructional improvement.

There is some reasonable basis for this lack of interest. Many teachers of today lived through the bountiful decades of the fifties and sixties when community colleges bid against one another for the services of any correctly credentialed instructor. They have grown up professionally with the attitude that their autonomy was assured through salutary neglect. They became accustomed to overcrowded classrooms, bulging audio-visual and library budgets, and professional mobility. The changes of the last few years have come as a shock. They are aware that something is very wrong when their classrooms are now without students, they can buy neither projector nor book, and no new teaching staff has been hired for several years.

Some teachers, often the senior ones, are quite content to wait. Tenure laws and the traditional institutional abhorrence of legal battles provides them with some security in their passive vigil. Other instructors, not as sure of their positions, often go about their teaching chores like the feeding hare of the Great Plains--their ears cocked, always sniffing the air for a predator. For both kinds of instructor, any unusual activity which is directed toward their performance will not be perceived with disinterest.

Yet in spite of this unsettled atmosphere, the past five years have seen an increase in staff development that is

proportional to declining enrollments. It has become one of the most popular themes for workshops and conferences, and the halls of hotels hosting these confabulations literally ring with pedagogical jargon and promises of panacea. Boards of trustees, administrators, and selected staff have hurried back to their respective campuses with the high hopes that they may have found the cure for everything from those sagging enrollments to the unattended orientation programs. Robert Simerly (1976) found that in the last four years between 400 and 500 faculty development programs have been generated in the United States, and yet, ". . .there is no clear agreement about what faculty development programs should be doing."

This burgeoning of staff development programs has caused many unwary teachers to become the target of unworkable, ill-thought-out, and potentially destructive schemes. Many of these instructors have been through experiences which have not always followed the canons of good pedagogy. They are suspicious and worried, for they are aware the era of staff development is not over. Their concern is largely based on what has gone on before. At least three forms of activity have been classified by at least one source or another as staff development: "Self-evaluation," the "in-house-expert," and the "invited consultant." Most community college

instructors are only too aware of these categories and the deficiencies of each.

In the typical circumstance self-evaluation comes first. Of course the scenerio varies, but it ordinarily follows a pattern where the institution professes a sudden interest in or concern for the quality of instruction, and the administrators verbally encourage the teachers to improve. The words of inspiration come at the orientation program or at the extra-publicized faculty meeting. Streams of encouragement continue in the form of approved proposals for instructional improvement and monies for travel and conferences. Divisions and departments are allowed retreats, and on-campus workshops appear with discussion leaders emulating barkers as they share their particular brands of innovation.

The problem is that little has been done to find a teaching standard, or point of origin from which improvement can be measured. Some teachers jostle for a visible position where they can bask in the rays of administration's positive attending behavior. Others take the more circuitous route of seeking positive student reaction through courting teacher-of-the-year awards. Still others go into their offices and close their doors.

And then the era of self-evaluation comes to an end: partially from its own inertia, partially through active resistance

by some, and partially because the payoff to the participants does not warrant further effort. The introspective, innovative teacher who had constantly worked at refining, developing, and improving his or her technique, style, and fund of knowledge, continues to develop that technique, style, and fund of knowledge. The other kind of teacher continues to be the other kind.

Of course that result, or lack of result, is not in itself an important criticism. No serious student of staff development would claim immediate or major improvements by simply implementing a program. E. H. Jabker (1977) writes:

"...it is unlikely that programs for faculty development--no matter how effective--will alter the way most faculty teach and think. There are too many powerful forces in opposition to this possibility--the most that can be reasonably expected to occur are relatively moderate changes."

But the results of a plan like self-evaluation, without a distinct point of origin or a well-constructed and agreed upon strategy, can be nothing more than fragmentary and indefinite. And even when the occasional teacher does show measurable progress in his or her development, there remains the question, at what cost? The complexion and competence of a teaching staff does not necessarily improve because one or two of its members dramatically improve their teaching effectiveness. Their improvement might have come at the cost of faculty

cooperation, harmony, colleague openness, or any of the many other intangibles that make up the teaching environment.

Self-evaluation, then, falls short of being an adequate solution for the problems that beset the modern community college. Still, pleas for staff development continue as the concerned institutions grope for the formula for increased teaching effectiveness. Often those efforts are enlarged beyond the first step of self-evaluation to include the exploitation of the talents of the more successful teachers on campus, the "in-house-experts."

This step in staff development is usually initiated either by the administration in specific invitation to the chosen instructors, or by very dedicated teaching committees. In either case, the instructors chosen to lead the upgrading ritual have certain characteristics in common: They have well-attended classes, are reasonably well accepted by both students and peers, and are willing to take on additional responsibilities without demanding much in return. They are seldom, if ever, professionally trained to teach teachers to teach.

That inadequacy, however, is usually not a major consideration on the grounds that individual skills can be transmitted without the benefit of education theory or in-depth instruction. And thus the in-house-expert is called upon to demonstrate his or her singular formula for success. Quite

often that skill is in lecturing, for as a method of instruction it has certain built-in advantages: It is one of the most economical methods of disseminating information, and since there is little evidence to indicate that amount of learning is at all dependent on class size, the large lecture can be supported institutionally as being educationally sound as well as inexpensive. In addition there is research, including that of Hinrichsen and Schaumburg (1975) to indicate that it is the method of instruction most preferred by students.

These economic, educational and preferential reasons certainly create a rationale for the institution to direct its attention toward the upgrading of lecture skills. The reasoning follows that if students prefer lectures, and there are no major constraints on the size of classes, then improved lecture skills will cause students to prefer lecture classes even more. And that will cause lecture classes to grow larger thereby causing the cost of instruction to decrease.

Continuing along with this sort of optimistic train of thought, the community colleges turn to their existing teachers to provide the necessary instruction. And the in-house experts are seldom up to the challenge. Often the Drama or Speech instructor, whose well-modulated voice is so impressive at orientation or in the informal gathering, is ill-prepared to do more than evaluate, or comment on, the lectures of his

colleagues. The ineffective lecturer who is disorganized and boring could not be expected to reverse that image without intensive work, and nowhere in the in-house-expert's concept is there a well thought out, coordinated plan to implement that improvement.

Still the faded images of constructive labor by the in-house-expert persist along with the remnants of those self-evaluation schemes. Yet the over-all picture of the college's lecturers has not measurably improved. The boring, disorganized lecturer continues to be boring and disorganized, but in addition is apt to show some signs of paranoia as a result of his experiences with staff development. And so the in-house-expert method ends, possibly because of teacher complaints, or possibly because administration senses instructor dissatisfaction. The college becomes ready for the third approach to staff development, the invited consultant.

There is some teacher support for the ~~idea~~ of the invited consultant. One survey by Golemon (1974) indicates that both deans and teaching staff felt that consultants were useful. Yet the invited consultant method, like the other methods, is not without its problems and repercussions. Golemon's early observation is that: "Just as there are not enough faculty well trained as teachers, so there not as many consultants as are needed to assist in the necessary training and pedagogical

support of teachers."

The invited consultant is often considered by teaching staff in the stereotyped image of one who is more interested in enlarging his own vita and reputation than in significantly assisting instruction at the local community college. No matter how noble his intentions, he has great difficulty escaping this posture of the after-dinner speaker; any two-day workshop, or even the week-long blitz suffers without followup and consistency. The teaching staff often views the consultant as an interloper who cannot possibly understand the unique qualities of their campus. They question both the value and the purpose of the invited consultant who may well reflect the views of the administration.

Thus the viewpoint of many teachers is that staff development programs have not been aimed at support, but rather have been attempts to solve what administrators perceive as institutional problems related to teaching. These teachers can easily equate staff development efforts with pressure tactics and attacks on teaching autonomy.

Yet the concept of staff development is not disappearing. Instead, the literature is increasing, both in volume and in quality. Serious program directors and students of staff development are now spending the needed time and effort to sift through the written material and experiences descriptive of

the history of staff development. And as this research comes to light, certain institutional responses seem appropriate. Caution is called for, both in overcoming teacher resistance and in implementing programs.

Directors of staff development in community colleges must be aware of the multitude of reasons for teacher resistance; they must be aware that, in fact, that resistance is consistent with the instructors' experience. Directors of staff development must be aware that the methods employed in the past, no matter how universally, do not guarantee success--even the practice of video playback, a basic tool for the analysis of teaching performance, is being questioned. Fuller and Manning (1973) maintain that some teachers ". . . may not benefit or may be harmed by it." Finally, directors of staff development must know that some teachers with whom they will be dealing have, in the name of improved teaching, been subjected to overly publicized and ill-conceived programs, false starts, and irrational justifications. There is no quick way in which these experiences can be sublimated or resistance lessened.

There is also no quick way in which a successful staff development program can be implemented. There is not yet a single best way to improve teaching effectiveness. The hundreds of different development programs illustrate that fact. Further, the existing programs are usually not first rate.

Collins and Case (1974) report ". . .little if any. . .budget is allocated. . .and responsibility for planning and carrying out a first-rate program most often falls between the administrative cracks."

And the criticism of existing programs mounts. Warren Bryan Martin began his 1975 presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges with the warning that: "Bluntly, most faculty development programs are superficially conceptualized, parochial in strategies, and tactics, and capable of only trivial outcomes."

Martin does not see an answer yet in the kinds of development programs now being proposed. He writes: "Most of the ideas being discussed in connection with faculty development programs are of greater importance to the institution than to the individual, to the administration than to faculty."

Most criticism, like that of Martin, is aimed not at the theory of staff development, but rather at the negative aspects of poorly constructed and poorly implemented programs. Staff development which is pointed toward staff support, development of teachers, and the improvement of teaching, is still a laudable and achievable goal, and one with which many community college teachers would agree.

There is no single best way to implement a staff development

program and there is not yet a single best program to be implemented. But the way is still clear to create an environment which will provide fertile ground for future positive progress. For example, much can be done to prepare the entire institution for a possible program in which teachers could cooperate.

Since one negative aspect of current programs centers on the conflict between teachers and administrators, efforts should be made to reduce tension and build an environment of trust, difficult as this may be. One way in which it might be accomplished would be to insulate the program director from administrative association by installing an Instructional Improvement Committee or some other committee of teachers above the office of staff development. This chain of command might allay fears that information gathered by the staff development office could be used for purposes other than assisting in the improvement of teaching.

Once a working relationship is established, baseline data could be secured. This would include, as D. M. Rhodes (1977) writes:

"...information about the teaching procedures actually being used in an institution, the quality of those procedures as carried out, the perceptions students and staff have concerning teaching at that institution, and the attitudes they display toward it."

This information could then be used to establish whether or

not there were, indeed, problems with teaching and that staff development was needed. Baseline data would also provide a point of departure from which future progress could be measured. Teachers could be assisted in their quest for improvement and not simply instructed to "improve." They could be supported as they strive to maintain, or improve on, the campus-wide quality of instruction.

In the next five years many community colleges will experience an increased demand for staff development. College administrators are still searching for solutions to enrollment deficits and there is little indication that student criticism of instruction will wane.

There is an increasing need for staff developers to become aware of the institutional benefits to be derived from staff development beyond, simply, the development of staff. These benefits, such as stemming student criticism, and cutting down on enrollment decreases, although ancillary in nature, should not be ignored.

While pedagogical advances are of primary concern, the next few years will be critical to the permanent establishment of responsible staff-development programs. In those years, as developers strive for mutual trust between staff and administration, both sides must reap some rewards. The great concerns of administrators as well as instructors should be

incorporated into programs in order to make the total staff development picture a success. While the instructional staff should be allowed to experiment without fear of administrative criticism when they fail, so too should the administration have some assurance that their very real problems will be addressed. This can be done through campus-wide commitment to the program that will at least well-publicize to students and community the institutional goal of excellence in teaching. Student criticism is bound to drop when it is apparent from all sides that pedagogy is being analyzed and improved; decreases in enrollment, the reasons for which can hardly be understood, at least cannot be considered a product of teaching disinterest when so much effort is being expended in that area.

The directors of staff development can become the conscience of the college. They must weigh carefully their decisions regarding instruction and institution, for instructional staff and administration have long been at odds with one another. The next five years could be a transitional period in which instruction and administration could be welded into a force in which both parts realize their role and support each other.

The viewpoint of the teaching staff toward staff development expressed in this paper is seen through some eyes as

retarding pedagogical progress. But it can also be seen as a positive force: Staff resistance has acted as a brake on the runaway race to be the first, or the biggest, or the brightest of the staff development programs. Directors of staff development should respond. It is time for them to proceed, but with caution. They must become thoroughly acquainted with the staff members with whom they will be dealing, and establish a mutual environment of trust; then they should take great pains to make the goals of development consistent with the views of that staff. Any development programs undertaken must merge with the personality and thrust of the staff; and, as in Hippocrates' Epidemics, "Help, or else Do no Harm."

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